WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT RENEWED CIVIL WAR

Barbara F. Walter
Professor of Political Science
University of California, San Diego

B6

bfwalter

Introduction

This paper reviews the state of the social science literature on the conditions that lead to the resumption of civil war after one has already ended. A civil war may end in any number of ways such as a decisive military victory, a negotiated peace settlement, or withdrawal, but for the purposes of this study it is defined as a situation where sovereignty is no longer contested, and where there is an absence of residual lower-level violence. Renewed civil war occurs when armed opposition to the state re-emerges, and battle deaths in any given year once again exceed 1,000.

To date, nine quantitative studies have focused on the subject of renewed civil war (Licklider 1995; Hartzell 1999; Doyle & Sambanis 2000; Hartzell, Hoddie & Rothchild 2001; Hartzell & Hoddie 2003; Dubey 2004; Fortna 2003; Fortna 2004; and Walter 2004) These studies have found that four factors strongly predict renewed civil war. Countries that have experienced a particularly long civil war, followed by low economic development, low levels of democracy, and that have no outside help with the post-war transition are significantly more likely to experience renewed civil war than those that did not. A number of factors expected to play an important role, such as the identity or ethnicity of the combatants and the level of hostility between the combatants in the first war, have no apparent effect. The literature remains uncertain about the exact type of external intervention that is most likely to bring long-term peace, and the ways in which post-war elites can be encouraged to accept economic development and democratization, but a number of studies in economics and political science are beginning to address these issues.

What follows is organized into three sections. The first section presents the three most prominent explanations for why civil wars resume. Civil wars are likely to recur because (1) grievances remain unresolved, (2) the opportunity exists to challenge the government for a better outcome, or (3) because bargaining problems stand in the way of a stable, long-term settlement. The second section presents the detailed findings from existing quantitative studies of renewed civil war. This will reveal that we know some things - low per capita income, for example, is consistently related to renewed war - but much more work needs to be done to understand the full range of factors influencing renewed violence. The final section takes up the issue of future research and discusses important questions that still need to be addressed.

I. CURRENT EXPLANATIONS OF RENEWED CIVIL WAR

Most studies of renewed civil war fall into one of three camps: those that argue that civil wars

resume because grievances have not been resolved or have been aggravated by the previous war; those that argue that wars resume because the opportunity costs once again favor war; and those that argue that wars resume because of difficult to resolve bargaining problems.

A. Renewed War as a Result of Underlying Grievance or Motive

Fighting one civil war can have the effect of aggravating the very conditions that encouraged groups to rebel in the first place, making additional war more likely. Three factors in particular are often believed to be magnified by war: ethnic differences, poor living conditions, and inter-group hostilities.

Ethnic Differences

Civil wars that are fought between competing identity groups are believed to be particularly intractable since, as Ted Gurr has observed, "cultural identities - those based on common descent, experience, language, and belief - tend to be stronger and more enduring than most civic and associational identities." (Gurr 2000:66) Moreover, once war breaks out, ethnic identities and hatreds tend to become cemented in ways that make cooperation and co-existence between the groups even more difficult, and these are the wars that are likely to recur over time. Kaufmann 1996, for example, has even gone as far to argue that the only way to prevent renewed violence in these cases is to partition ethnic groups into separate homogeneous regions. The recurring conflict in the Balkans, as well as the repeated violence between groups such as the Hutus and Tutsis, Turks and Armenians, Jews and Arabs are often identified as examples of this phenomenon.

Economic Development

Groups, however, may also pursue civil war because they are dissatisfied with their current quality of life and have few alternatives for change. Individuals who reside in countries with low levels of economic development, and who exist in a state of relative deprivation have reasons to use violence to seek reform or improvement. Gurr (1971, 2000), for example, has argued that groups are more likely to rebel when they feel disadvantaged vis-à-vis other groups in society. Others cite poverty, poor public health, or other features related to low levels of human development that can create anger and resentment against the state. These conditions are often made worse by one civil war, where a country that had been poor to begin with, becomes even poorer as a result. If these conditions do not improve, or even deteriorate over time, a second civil war is likely. Collier and Sambanis 2002 have called this the "conflict trap."

War-Generated Hostility

A final argument related to underlying motives sees war-generated hostility as a potential cause of recurring conflict. The logic here is that a particularly bloody war can intensify enmities between rival groups making them more apt to use violence against each other in the future. In a study of violence in civil wars Kalyvas (2000), for example, found that "personal vengeance was a recurrent motive" for participation in war. Wars that inflict high costs on combatants and their supporters could heighten animosity between them and

create a strong desire for retribution even after the war ends. If this is true, then parties involved in more costly wars should retaliate with greater frequency than if they had faced fewer costs and sustained less suffering.

B. Renewed War as a Result of Opportunity Costs

Theories that focus on underlying grievances or motives are often complemented by those that focus on the ability of ethnic groups to mobilize and sustain a rebel organization over time. A group may have grievances against the state, but unless it is also able to organize and recruit supporters to fight for a particular cause, no real challenge is likely to be launched. Three sets of hypotheses have been proposed for when the opportunity for insurgency is likely to be favorable.

Conditions Favoring Rebel Recruitment

A number of scholars have argued that factors related to rebel recruitment should be at least as important in determining where war will occur as factors related to grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Gates 2002; Walter 2004a). The argument rests on the simple observation that for civil wars to resume, hundreds or thousands of individual citizens must actively choose to support an insurgency. This places the onus for renewed war on ordinary people and the trade-offs they must make for returning to war or staying at peace. Walter (2004a), for example, has argued that support for an insurgency is likely to become attractive when high levels of individual hardship exist, such as high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy. Collier and Hoeffler, in turn, argue that low secondary schooling and per capita income are likely to increase support. Citizens whose standard of living remains at critically low levels after one war are likely to be more open to renewed rebellion than those citizens whose welfare has improved or appears to be improving over time.

Money and Supplies

The ability to recruit soldiers and supporters, however, is not likely to be sufficient to sustain a rebellion over time. Money and supplies will also be needed to build an organization, entice individuals to join, and pay for the materials needed during active resistance. Collier and Hoeffler (2001) have argued that a group's access to finance in the form of extractable natural resources and donations from diasporas make rebellion feasible. Stedman (2001) has similarly claimed that access to disposable resources such as gems, minerals, or timber make the implementation of any peace settlement more difficult because it provides armies with a means to continue fighting. Countries, therefore, that contain certain types of resources and have many co-ethnics living abroad should be more likely to experience recurring civil war.

Weak Political Institutions

A final explanation focuses on state capacity and a government's ability to police and control peripheral areas as a key factor affecting group decisions to challenge the state. Fearon and Laitin (2003), for example, have argued that countries with rough terrain, large populations, or weak central governments are more likely to experience rebellion because groups are better able to evade government repression over time. This has the

effect of lowering the opportunity costs a group must pay to go to organize and fight against the government, making rebellion more attractive (see also Collier and Hoeffler 2001). Similarly, states that lack functioning political institutions or are so weak that they have little control over their own borders are more apt to harbor spoilers capable of sabotaging peace agreements. (Stedman 2001) If these features do not change over time, or become worse as the result of one war, renewed war is likely.

C. Bargaining Problems

So far we have seen how enduring grievances and opportunity may affect decisions to renew a civil war. But war can still emerge even if grievances are resolved and even if both sides would prefer to settle. In an influential article, Fearon (1995) argued that war may occur for three additional reasons: (1) because the stakes are difficult to divide in a mutually-satisfactory way, (2) because one or both sides withholds or misrepresents private information that would otherwise allow disputants to reach a settlement, or (3) because the combatants are unable to enforce and implement the terms they do reach. Each of these factors can be applied to the problem of renewed civil war.

Problems Dividing the Stakes:

A number of scholars have argued that certain stakes are more difficult to divide in a mutually agreeable way, making renewed war more likely. Ikle (1991), for example, has argued that civil wars fought over total goals (such as the complete overthrow of the incumbent regime; or the complete eradication of a hated political system) may be more difficult to resolve over the long-term than those seeking limited goals that lend themselves to compromise. Toft (2003) and Stedman (2001) have argued that wars fought over territory are likely to be treated as indivisible because groups view their "homeland" in all-or-nothing terms. Wars fought for total goals or territory may end temporarily, but will more likely re-emerge as soon as groups have regrouped sufficiently to seek a more satisfying solution. The nature of the stakes under dispute and the ease by which they can be divided, therefore, determines how long peace is likely to last.

The stakes may also be increasingly difficult to divide as the number of actors involved in a dispute increases. The greater the number of factions involved in a civil war, the more difficult it will be to reach a settlement, and the more likely one or more of the factions is to return to war. Multi-party settlements are likely to be particularly unstable for one of four reasons. First, it's possible that an agreement simply does not exist that would please all of the parties involved, making continued war attractive to at least one group. (Oye 1985). Second, each of the factions involved in a conflict has an incentive to hold-out on a peace agreement in order to obtain better terms. Third, negotiations may go through a destabilizing process called cycling where one or more groups continuously shifts its alliance in order to obtain the best possible settlement terms. This could have the effect of causing even signed agreements to fail to be implemented. Finally, Stedman (1997, 2001, 2003) has argued that extremists almost always exist outside the bargaining process who have nothing to gain from a settlement, and have a vested interest in preventing peace. (Stedman, 1997, 2001) Unless these parties are either co-opted or controlled, renewed war is likely.

Information Problems:

Information problems represent a second type of bargaining problem. Wars may also re-emerge because rebels remain uncertain about a government's strength or resolve and believe that war may succeed a second time around. A long literature in international relations has argued that wars may occur because one side wrongly believes it is likely to prevail in war and refuses to settle as a result. These mistakes can occur because one or both sides chooses to withhold important information about how willing they are to fight, how many capabilities they have, or how they will conduct the war, in order to maintain a strategic advantage over their opponent. A bargaining impasse may also arise because one or both sides consciously exaggerates their strength in an attempt to negotiate better terms.

Three types of information have been identified as making renewed war more likely. Alastair Smith and Allan Stam (2002), for example, have argued that the duration of a previous war provides important information to the combatants about each other's ability to wage war in the future. "Wars the end quickly leaving one or both sides still quite uncertain about the true balance of power," according to Smith and Stam, "are much more likely to reopen than those wars that end not only with agreement about the balance of power but also little doubt about the certainty of that agreement." Long wars, therefore, act as an important information source, with more accurate information helping to prevent renewed conflict in the future.

Wars that end in a decisive military victory are also believed to provide better information than those that end in negotiated settlements. A party that has been decisively defeated in one war can better calculate the costs and outcome of a second war and is likely to be discouraged from resuming the war as a result. Zartman (1989, 1995) and Wagner (1994), have also argued that the relative strength of the two opponents becomes even more clear-cut in the aftermath of a decisive outcome because the victor almost always gains full control over the instruments of state, allowing it to consolidate power even further. The way the first war is concluded, therefore, helps to inform parties about the likely outcome of a second or third war.

Finally, information about a government's willingness to grant concessions in the face of a violent challenge may also affect the likelihood of renewed war. Walter (2004b) has argued that groups that have observed a government making concessions to one rebel group are more likely to launch their own challenge because they believe the government will do the same for them. A government that negotiates a settlement to one civil war (rather than fighting to a decisive conclusion), therefore, is more apt to face additional wars in the future.

Commitment Problems:

Even if a bargain is reached, war might still re-emerge because a treaty cannot be successfully enforced over time. Two types of enforcement or commitment problems may stand in the way of long-term peace.

1. Short-Term Problems of Military Demobilization

Walter (1997, 2004a) has argued that wars may emerge even after a negotiated settlement is signed if the combatants believe they could be victimized as they demobilize and prepare for peace. A comprehensive peace agreement may be signed and a temporary ceasefire may result, but if the former combatants fear that they could be taken advantage of, further steps toward implementation are unlikely. Renewed war can be avoided, but is likely to require intervention from a third party willing to help enforce the terms of the treaty and guarantee the safety of the combatants as they transition from war to peace. At the same time, if the third party loses credibility with combatants that it is committed to the peace, foreign intervention can actually contribute to the risk of renewed civil war.

2. Longer-Term Problems of Power-sharing/Democracy

A number of scholars have focused more closely on problems of long-term enforcement of the terms of a peace settlement, and in particular, the question of political power-sharing. Two different arguments are made. The first is that political, military and/or territorial guarantees that delineate strict demarcations of power among the competing factions are necessary to empower former combatants to constrain each other and to enforce the terms of the peace settlement (Walter 1997, 2003). Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild (1999, 2001) argue that provisions for territorial autonomy in power-sharing arrangements support the credibility of the peace agreement by limiting the authority at the political center and allowing groups to balance power among each other.

The second argument concerns the procedural aspects of power-sharing arrangements that deal with democratic institutional design-the electoral system or executive constraints, for example. These rules govern behavior and prevent the re-emergence of conflict (Doyle and Sambanis 2000, Elbadawi and Sambanis 2002, Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens. 2002). Hartzell and Hoddie (2003) argue that electoral systems based on proportional representation are more apt to contribute to a lasting peace, while Dubey (2004) argues that the countries with parliamentary and semi-presidential systems (rather than presidential systems), and those that place significant constraints on the executive should create a more durable peace. Each of these institutional features divides power in a way that helps prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a single group, and reassures competing factions that they will not be taken advantage of over the long-term.

II. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

As mentioned above, there have been nine statistical studies that have looked specifically at the causes of renewed violence. There are slight differences in case selection and in the proxies each of the studies used to measure both the dependent and independent variables. Still, a number of factors have been robust across all specifications, giving us important insights into at least some of

the factors associated with renewed civil war. In what follows, I summarize the relationships that appear to be robust, and those that are still being debated. What we will see is that some (but not all) types of grievances and opportunity costs mattered in the re-emergence of war, and that certain information and commitment problems do appear to stand in the way of long-term peace.

A. Factors that are Robust:

The four best predictors of civil war renewal are a country's post-war economic development, its post-war level of democracy, the duration of its previous war, and the presence or absence of outside peacekeepers in the aftermath of war.

Economic Development:

High infant mortality, low per capita income, low per capita consumption of electricity, low life expectancy, and high levels of adult illiteracy were all significantly related to a higher incidence of renewed violence. This was true whether one looked at short-term peace (measured as peace for 2-5 years) or long-term peace (measured as the number of years of post-war peace) (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004; Dubey 2004; Walter 2004a). There was also some support for a relationship between a negative change in economic development and renewed war. Countries that experienced a rise in infant mortality, a drop in life expectancy and adult illiteracy in the aftermath of one war appeared to be significantly more likely to experience a second civil war (Walter 2004a). Since it is impossible to tell whether these relationships are predominantly due to grievances or the opportunity costs of fighting, the underlying causal mechanism remains unclear. Still, this is one of the strongest findings to come from existing empirical studies.

Democracy:

Various measures of democracy were also consistently associated with renewed war. Dubey (2004) found that democracy exercises the most significant and consistent effect on the duration of a peace after a war has ended. Walter (2004a) also found that the level of democracy powerfully predicts the initiation of new wars. Fortna (2004) and Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild (2001) found that the level of democracy during a war had no effect on the duration of the peace once that war ended. What appears to be important is the level of democracy that is established once a war ends, and not the level that existed previously.

Proportional Representation

Certain elements of democracy, however, appeared to be more important in bringing peace than others. In a study that attempted to disaggregate different elements of democratic regimes, Dubey (2004) found that more proportional regimes extended the life of a peace settlement. These results are supportive of the consociationalist claim that presidential regimes are less helpful than semi-presidential or parliamentary regimes, although every form of democracy did better than a non-democracy.

The Duration of the Previous War

In line with arguments that point to the importance of information in preventing renewed war, all of the studies found that the duration of the previous war is positively and significantly related to the duration of the post-war peace. Doyle and Sambanis (2000), Hartzell, Hoddie & Rothchild (2001), Fortna (2004), Dubey (2004) and Walter (2004a) all find that the longer a civil war, the less likely it is to recur. This is generally interpreted to mean that protracted civil wars give parties the opportunity to gather information based on the course of the previous war and make better calculations regarding the risks and costs of future wars. Fortna (2004) and Dubey (2004), however, interpret this finding to support the war weariness hypotheses - those that have endured particularly drawn-out wars have fewer resources and a lower inclination to fight again.

Peacekeeping:

The ability to credibly commit to demobilization and power-sharing also appeared to be influential in whether or not war resumed. Peacekeepers are found to be effective in solving these credibility problems by providing security guarantees and enforcement of peace settlements (Hartzell et. al. 1999, 2001, 2003; Doyle and Sambanis 2000, Stedman 2001, 2002, Walter 1997, 2002). Fortna (2003, 2004) finds that peacekeeping contributes to the durability of peace after civil wars, even when accounting for the selection bias of peacekeeping operations for intervention in more intractable conflicts. Dubey (2004) is the only study to find that third party intervention has no effect on the duration of the post-war peace. Since his coding of peacekeeping is based on Doyle and Sambanis (2000), it is not clear why the results differ.

Peacekeeping can also raise the costs of fighting and lower the costs of peace. Through sanctions, aid, debt relief, and other "carrots and sticks," international intervention can be effective at creating a post-war environment conducive to economic recovery, reduced grievances, democratization, and peace (Addison and Murshed 2003a, 2003b, Doyle and Sambanis 2000, Wood 2003). Regan (1996) finds that renewed conflict is particularly unlikely when the large party intervenes militarily and economically on the government side. He argues that these strategies raise the costs of fighting, while a major power possesses greater military and economic resources, as well as political influence, to direct towards the peace process.

In sum, these findings strongly suggest that wars recur in countries that are not only poor, but where human suffering is particularly intense, where economic growth is not taking place, where democratic outlets for change do not exist, where problems with demobilization exist, and where the previous war was short.

Factors Still Being Debated:

A number of possible causes of renewed civil war are still being debated: the role of ethnicity; the effect of war generated hostility, the effect of lootable resources; the number of actors; different types of peacekeeping; partition; and the outcome of the previous war. In addition, a number of factors hypothesized in the literature to have an effect on the outbreak of civil wars more

generally, have yet to be tested against renewed civil war. This includes access to disposable resources, rough terrain, large populations; diasporas; and various measures of government capacity.

The Role of Ethnicity

The results on the role of ethnicity have been mixed. While Doyle and Sambanis (2000) found a significant (but small) negative relationship between wars that break down along ethnic or religious lines and peace for two to five years after the first war ended, Licklider (1995), Hartzell (1999), Hartzell, Hoddie, Rothchild (2001), Dubey (2004) and Walter (2004a) find no relationship at all. This discrepancy is likely to be the result of different dependent variables. Doyle and Sambanis' study focused only on short-term peace (2-5 years after the first war had ended), while the other studies looked at the duration of peace over time. Thus, while ethnic/religious divisions may make it more difficult to bring peace to a country in the immediate aftermath of a civil war, it does not appear to hamper the peace over the long-term.

Effect of Partition

Kaufmann (1996) argued that partition was the only way to permanently resolve ethnic difference once one war had occurred. Using a cross-sectional data set of all civil wars since 1944, Sambanis (2000), however, found that partition does not significantly prevent war recurrence. Separating ethnic groups does not appear to resolve the problem of violent ethnic antagonism between the same groups over time. Walter (2004a), however, found that governments that had agreed to partition their country as a result of one war were significantly more likely to face a different war with a different set of rebels. Walter interpreted this to mean that government concessions over territory in one case appear to encourage additional challengers to initiate their own demands.

War Generated Hostilities

War generated hostilities had different effects on the probable return to war depending on how it was measured. When measured using the number of battle deaths, civilian deaths, and displacements, its relationship to renewed war was positive and significant. High death tolls and displacements in the previous war significantly increase the likelihood of renewed civil war (Doyle and Sambanis 2000, Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild 200, Fortna 2003, 2004; and Dubey 2004). However, when only battle deaths were included, they had no real effect on the likelihood that a second or third war would occur (Walter 2004a). The fact that battle deaths are not significantly related to war recurrence when separated from civilian deaths and human displacement suggest that these latter types of human suffering play a larger role in rebel calculations than what happens on the battlefield.

Lootable Resources

Only one study included a measure of lootable resources or natural resource dependence.

Doyle and Sambanis (2000) found that a country's share of primary exports to GDP was significantly and negatively associated with 2-5 years of post-war peace (as well as a movement toward greater democracy). They interpreted this in two ways. It could be that easily lootable resources provide incentives to engage in predatory violence. It could also imply an undiversified economy that is vulnerable to slow economic growth.

The Number of Actors

The two studies that attempted to test Stedman's proposition that the greater the number of warring parties, the greater the probability of renewed war had different results. This is almost certainly due to the different ways in which each study measured the duration of the post-war peace. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) found a significant negative relationship between the number of hostile factions and the presence of 2-5 years of peace after a civil war had ended. If one looked at how long peace lasted over time, however, no significant relationship was found (Fortna 2003, 2004). This suggests that a larger number of actors tends to destabilize a peace over time. A third preliminary study by Nilsson (2004) has found that parties that are excluded from a peace agreement are more likely to be involved in post-settlement armed conflict.

Different Types of Peacekeeping

While Fortna (2004) finds that all types of peacekeeping missions have a significant effect on the duration of the post-war peace, Doyle and Sambanis (2004) find that peacekeeping operations are not all equally effective. They found that a particular type of outside intervention - multidimensional UN peacekeeping that included extensive civilian functions, economic reconstruction, institutional reform, and election oversight - were extremely significant and positively associated with 2-5 years of post-war peace. For Doyle and Sambanis, this type of peacekeeping was effective because it signalled international interest in ending the conflict and offered badly needed aid and technical expertise to the parties, reducing hostility and boosting domestic capacities.

Decisive Military Victory

A decisive military victory's effect on the duration of the post-war peace were also mixed. Licklider (1995), Dubey (2004), and Fortna (2004) all found that a decisive military outcome in one war reduces the likelihood of another war by a significant amount. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) and Walter (2004a) find no effect at all. All four of the studies use the measure of decisive military outcome offered by Doyle and Sambanis (2000). Licklider, as well as Doyle and Sambanis use similar measures of duration (2-5 years of post-war peace), while the remaining studies use a longer term measure of peace years. It remains unclear why the results differ and additional research is required to better understand these relationships.

Signed Peace Treaty

Doyle and Sambanis (2000) find that peace treaties are positively correlated with 2-5 years of post-war peace. Fortna (2004), however, finds just the opposite. Once again, this

difference is likely due to the dissimilar measurements these studies use for the duration of peace, with Fortna having a much longer perspective. Thus, while peace treaties appear to bring about a temporary halt in the fighting, they do not appear to be as successful in bringing long-term peace.

Factors That Have No Effect

There were two factors that were hypothesized to influence renewed war but were not found to be significant in any of the aforementioned studies. The ethnic diversity/heterogeneity of a country had no effect on whether a war recurred, nor did civil wars fought over total goals (Doyle and Sambanis 2002, Dubey 2004, Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000, Hartzell 1999; and Walter 1997; 2002; 2004a).

III. WHAT WE STILL NEED TO LEARN

Current studies have shown us that economic development, democratization, and peacekeeping are likely to make repeat civil war less likely. These findings, however, leave the most important questions unanswered. What determines when and how democracy takes root in the aftermath of civil war? What factors encourage positive economic growth and improved individual welfare over time? Under what conditions are different types of peacekeeping offered, and what alternatives, if any, exist for third-party intervention? Economists and political scientists have begun to look at the question of the origins of development and democracy (see especially work by Acemoglu and Robinson). But if we wish to truly understand why some post civil-war leaders choose to open up their political systems and improve the individual welfare of their people while others do not, more in-depth studies on each of these questions will need to be pursued. Only then will we truly understand what it will take to break the conflict-trap.